

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

14 December 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commander Bagley
SUBJECT : Characteristics of the South Vietnamese
Government

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The following comments are responsive to paragraph 2b and
2c of your memorandum for [redacted] of 28 November 1961.
These comments complete the requirement.

1. Resignations from Diem Government

No available evidence substantiates reports that a large number of top South Vietnamese government personnel have resigned in recent months because of increasing frustration. Dissatisfaction among many officials, however, is evident from the number of attempted or threatened resignations and in remarks critical of Diem's leadership which have been made to US officials. This dissatisfaction undoubtedly differs in degree and has varying causes such as administrative confusion, discontent with the authoritarianism of the regime, and exclusion from the current "in-group." Many officials probably are deterred from resignation because of reluctance as civil servants to become publicly involved in political issues, concern over employment, seniority, or fear of possible reprisals. It is also of note,

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however, that several top officials are persons with little personal political loyalty to Diem or to his favored entourage, but are included in the government for their technical qualifications. Included in this category are Rural Affairs Secretary Tran Le Quang, National Education Secretary Nguyen Quang Trinh, Public Works Secretary Nguyen Van Dinh and Dean of Saigon University Law Faculty Vu Quoc Thuc.

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Approved For Release 2003/03/28 : CIA-RDP79S00427A000500050013-6

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2. Assessment of Qualified Personnel Not in Government

We can offer only a generalized assessment of the quantity and quality of persons not now serving the government of South Vietnam but deemed qualified for service. As an underdeveloped and partitioned country, and a former colony in which the development of responsible administrative talent was not encouraged, South Vietnam has a limited number of such persons available; moreover, qualified persons are not uniformly ambitious for public office. There is undoubtedly ^a sizeable group of Vietnamese not now serving the government who are of equal and in some cases better calibre than some now in key positions. A major reason for this are the demands placed by Diem on tested loyalty among senior officials, which stems both from Diem's own character and his justifiable concern over the motives of self-seeking groups such as the Dai Viet, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao sects, and over possible Communist-penetration of the government. While many Vietnamese traditionally

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have been "fence-sitters" as long as the future of their country remains unsettled, there is little question that the Diem regime has also alienated many qualified non-Communist Vietnamese who at one time would have willingly, if not enthusiastically, supported his government.